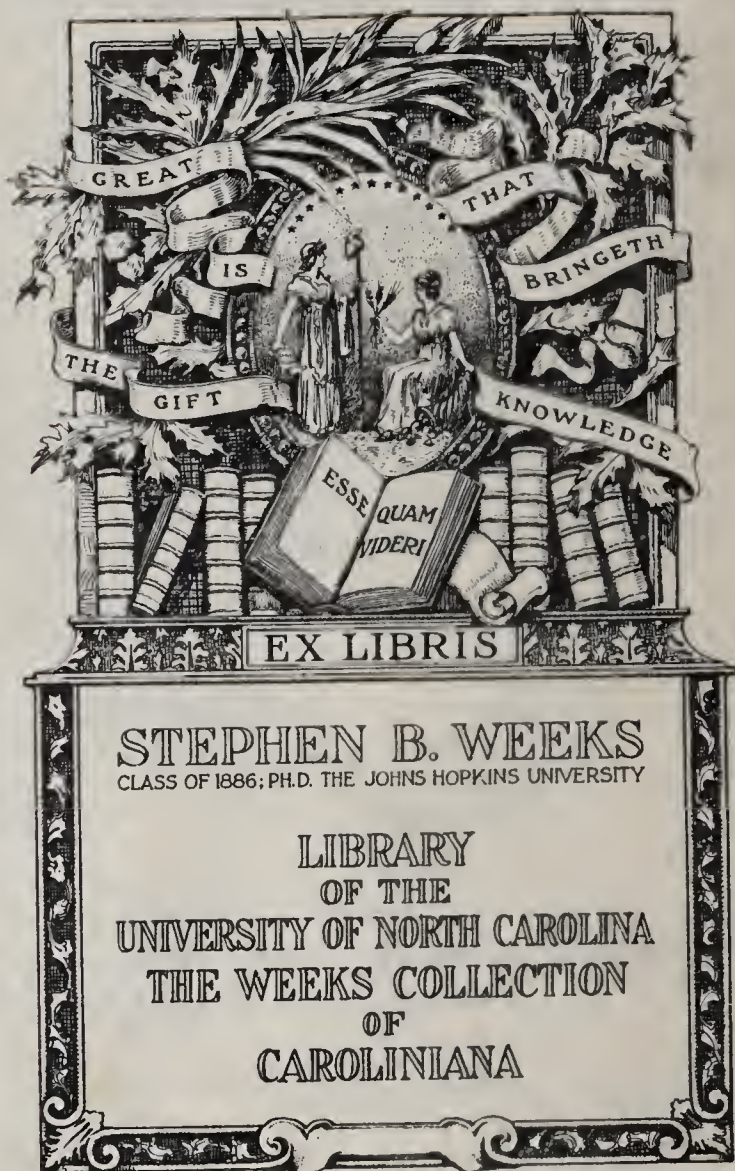


Autobiography

Weeks



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WEEKS
COLLECTION

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

—OF—

ALFRED LEONARD EDWARD WEEKS

AND

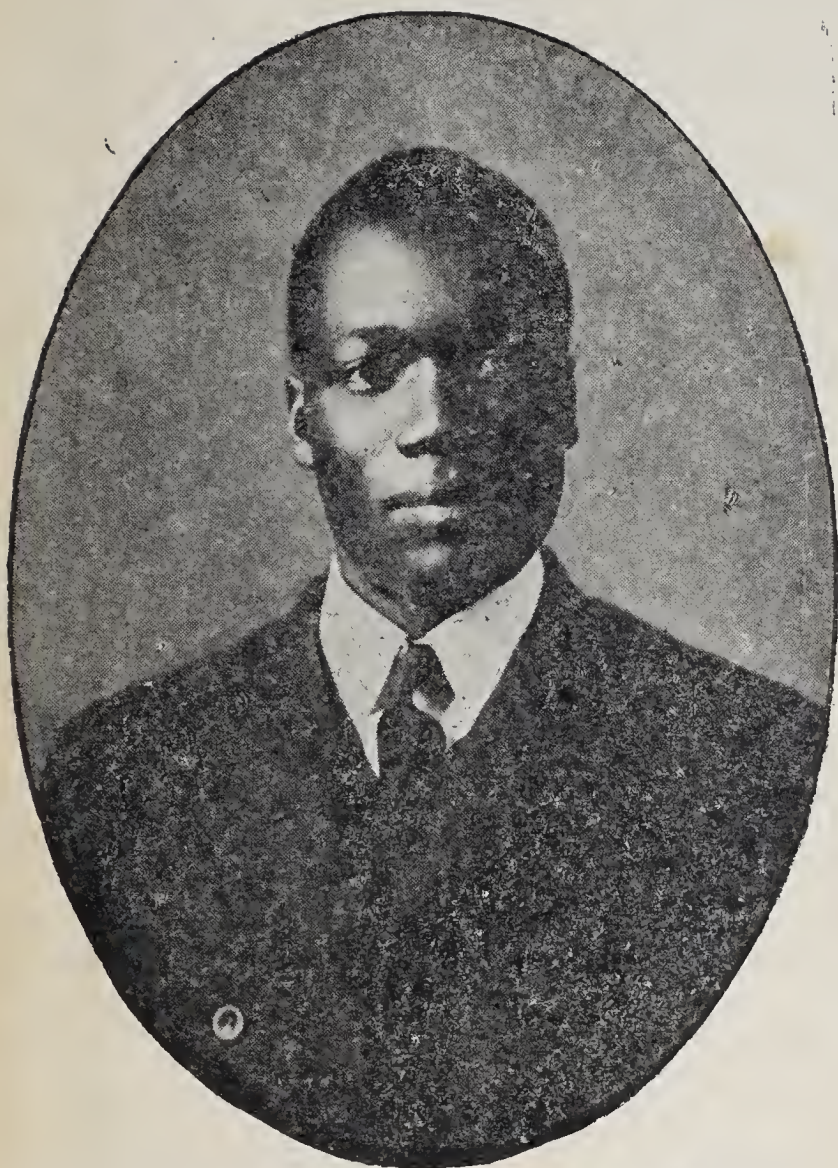
ANNIE ELIZABETH COOKE WEEKS

Principal and Wife

OF THE

Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute

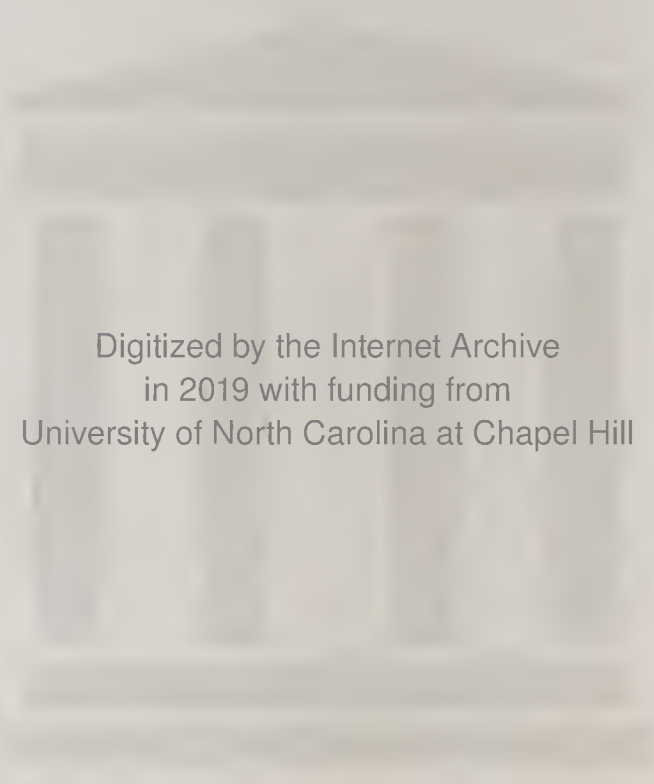
New Bern, N. C.



REV. ALFRED LEONARD EDWARD WEEKS

Born July 20th, 1875

Educated at Elizabeth City State Normal and Shaw University. Became pastor of the First Baptist Church, May 1900, which position he still holds. Founder and Principal of the New Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute, New Bern, N. C.



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A Sketch of the Life and Character of Rev. Alfred Leonard Edward Weeks.

Alfred Leonard Edward Weeks, the subject of this article, was born in Mount Olive, Wayne County, North Carolina, on July 20th, 1875. He is the son of Alfred and Laura Weeks, ex-slaves, who still live in that place. The humble home of his parents is situated in the Southern section of Mount Olive, in a neighborhood called Hillsboro. His father, having been sold several times in the days of slavery, helped to build the fortification around Richmond, Va., during the Civil War. He was very poor and not able to give his twelve children any advantages, educationally, aside from those found in the public schools—(which were very few.)

When quite young, Alfred Leonard was placed at school in the country, where before he was twelve years of age, his mind was the subject of religious impressions; although at the time he was ignorant of their source, he was afterward made sensible that it was the Lord's Holy Spirit that had thus early visited him. And when about nine years of age, his father happened to the accident of

cutting his foot nearly off, and thus he was not able for a long time, to assist in caring for the twelve children of the home.

Because of the accident above spoken of, his mother, Mrs. Laura Weeks, was compelled to hire herself to hotels or individual families as cook, until the children became old enough to help her. The children were reared therefore, from the crumbs which fell from the tables at the places wherever she worked.

After attaining his twelfth year, he entered school at Wynn's Chapel, where he prosecuted his studies, under the direction of Rev. A. A. Smith, for about three years. During this period his mind was often drawn into seriousness, and although his quick and lively disposition, and the many temptations to which he was exposed, sometimes led him astray, yet he was mercifully preserved from many of the snares into which the young and inexperienced too often fall. Much credit should be given to Rev. A. A. Smith for his private tutelage during these three years.

On August 3rd, in 1890, being 15 years old, he joined the Free Will Baptist Church, at Mount Olive. He

pursued his studies with great diligence and success, but his tender mind was much shocked at the dissipation and wickedness which prevailed among the members, and by obedience to the secret checks and limitations of the Holy Spirit, he was preserved from participating in the gross corruptions around him. Soon after he joined the church, under the living and powerful influence of the Gospel, Alfred Leonard Edward's spiritual condition was effectually reached: the witness for God in his own heart, owning and answering the testimony. The impressions which had been early made being thus renewed and strengthened, fresh desires after holiness were begotten in his soul. In this seeking frame of mind, he was led to perceive the emptiness and formality which prevailed among his people in their religion; and finding some of his fellow associates of similar views, they held religious meetings among themselves in their private homes. This greatly offended the heads of the church, who charged him with non-conformity. Alfred Leonard Edward, however, believing his principles and practices were founded in truth, and essential to his peace of mind, could

not abandon them; and as his determination was unalterable, he was forced to move his membership to the Missionary Baptist Church, where the gravity of his deportment, and correct conduct, indicated that the good work so early begun in him, was gradually going forward. He refrained from associating with the fashionable world, or mingling with its vain amusements, but took great delight in the company of the most grave and sober persons. His relatives viewed his conduct with great disapprobation. Alfred Leonard Edward's thirst, however, was not for earthly glory, but heavenly; "he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" and though it grieved him to disobey his earthly friends, he felt that it would be far worse to resist the will of his Father in Heaven.

This church and pastor, however, soon perceived that the young man's ambitions were worthy of encouragement, and he was therefore licensed to preach the Gospel at the age of 17 years.

The Lord had better things in store for him, even the things that accompany salvation; and soon after he

moved his membership, the visitations of the Holy Spirit to his soul were renewed, the glories of this world were stained in his view, and all of its pleasant pictures spoiled.

In reference to this period of his life, he says: "Now was all the glory of this world as a bubble; yea nothing was dear to me that I might win Christ; for the love, pleasure, and friendship of this world were a burden to my soul. In this seeking state I was directed to the testimony of Jesus in my own conscience as the true shining light, given me to discern the thoughts and intents of my own heart. And no sooner was I turned unto it but, I found it to be that which from my childhood had visited me, though I distinctly knew it not."

On July 15th, 1892, he presented himself to the County Superintendent of Public Instruction of Wayne County, as an applicant for a certificate to teach school in the public school of that county. Having finished his examination the county examiner said: "What does your father do?" "He is a blacksmith," was the reply. "You are black enough", said the examiner, " and you will only have to

get the smith. Your answers are good and you have made good marks on all of the branches, but your age will prevent you from receiving a certificate." "Thank you, I will try again," was the reply. On returning home Alfred Leonard Edward spent August and September in attending revival meetings, and reviewing the branches taught in the public school in North Carolina, and on October the 12th, early in the morning, he left his home with his coat on his shoulder, and covered the distance from Mount Olive, N. C., to Kinston, N. C. (which is 40 miles) for the purpose of taking examination on the 14th. Having taken examination, he made a good certificate, and on the day after the examination, he walked from Kinston to LaGrange, a distance of about 12 miles, where he secured a school to teach.

The school committee decided that the school should not open until the first Monday in the following December, and run for three months at a salary of \$20.00 per month.

On being told the decision of the committee, he walked back to Kinston N. C., and hired himself to the authorities of that town as a street hand

for 75 cents per day. Having worked here until the first of December, he sent one half of his earnings to his mother at Mount Olive, and fitted himself for his winter's work with the remainder, after having paid all of his bills. Having taught the school before mentioned in the winter of 1892—93, he returned to Mount Olive, where he had only \$5.00 of his winter's earnings left, after having divided with his parents. He purchased two acres of land, which cost \$100, and paid the \$5.00 on the purchase price. The summer was spent in grubbing and making ready one of these acres for the truck farm (strawberry crop.) Having planted this crop, he again taught the public school at LaGrange N. C., in the winter 1893—94, after which he went to Elizabeth City, and attended the State Normal School for two years, 1894—95 and 1895—96. During the time he was in attendance at the State Normal School at Elizabeth City, he managed to pay his way through this school by teaching public school in Perquiman county. Having finished at this school he next went to Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C., to take Theology. Having to divide his earnings with his parents, he

could not stay in school an entire session at any time, however, he would teach two or three months during the winter, and remain in school until the middle of April, and then go home to see about his strawberries. The following summer, after the first session he attended Shaw University, was spent in selling goods as an agent, and about the last of September he had above \$200.00 worth of goods stolen from him. He had worked hard to get back to school, and had saved his money, but a few days before the time for him to leave for school, was compelled to send all of his summer's earnings to the company to which the goods belonged, because the goods had been sent him on 30 days time, and he felt when the time was out the debt must be paid. Sending his trunk on to Raleigh, N. C., and walking from Mount Olive, N. C., to Selma, N. C., a distance of 40 miles, he boarded a train for Raleigh, riding 33 miles, where he hoped to enter Shaw University, although all of his money was paid out to save his credit, and his heart was aching because he had only two dollars with which to pay the first month's expenses (for the first

month's expenses were \$9.00—\$7.00 for board, lodging and tuition and \$2.00 incidental expenses for the year) Having arrived at Shaw University and having told of his summer's work together with what had befallen him a few days before the day on which he was to leave his home for school, he was allowed to enter by paying \$2.00 which was all the money he had. Having entered the University, the number of his acquaintances increased, and thereby his way grew more difficult; though he had found comfort in reading the Holy Scriptures, and thinking on Heavenly things he was now trying to see just where the other \$7.00 to pay the balance of the present month's expenses, will come from, and how he was to stay in school another month. But it had pleased the Lord to call him into the work of the Gospel ministry. As a messenger of glad tidings of life and salvation, he would leave the University each Friday evening for some place where he had secured an appointment to preach, having borrowed from some of his teachers, the money with which to go. The going away from the University each week only prepared him for his future use-

fulness, as he never was able to secure enough to pay any of his bills.

The following spring, the strawberry crop failed and the young man had many debts at home, which caused him more worry. Rev. A. A. Smith at this time, took in charge the land, and house, which Mr. Weeks had had erected, paying the partise to keep them from harming the young man. During the following summer, the time was spent in ditching, grubbing, picking berries, picking cotton or anything to obtain honest money, with which to pay debts and return to school. The summer was so short that the time came to enter school before the debts were paid, and so what money had been made, was divided among those to whom he was obligated, and he returned to school with more financial burdens than before. However, he kept full of life and kept trying to make himself. Having entered this time with more obligations, he nevertheless tried, as best he could, under the existing conditions, to do his best in his studies, On March 3rd, 1900 he was called to the pastorate of the Cedar Grove Baptist Church, (now First Baptist Church) of New Bern, N. C., where

he has been since that time. Arriving in New Bern and remaining there as pastor from the 1st of May 1900 to the 1st of May, 1902, where the school accommodations were very poor, for his people, he decided that if the Gospel is to be preached effectually the intellectual and industrial conditions of his people must be improved, and brought up to a standard where they can appropriate the teachings to themselves individually. Hence the birth of the school, which was founded by him, and which was chartered on the 7th day of May 1902.

The first session of the New Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute began on October 6, 1902, with an enrollment of about 300 pupils, and three teachers, namely, Rev. A. L. E. Weeks, Prof. J. M. B. Wooten, and Miss Annie Elizabeth Cooke. The property, known in New Bern, as the old Fair Grounds was purchased at a cost of \$12,500 on which was erected a two-story frame building 40x65 feet, containing four class rooms down stairs, and an assembly room up-stairs. Rev. Weeks was assisted by the generous citizens of the community, and by friends in the North, in providing the running expenses of the institution,

to some extent, but at no time has he been able to pay the bills when they came due or to close the school any session free of debt, from a point of running expenses. The teachers have been very considerate, have worked very faithfully to assist principle Weeks in carrying out his idea in this school.

On July 22, 1903, Rev. Weeks married Miss Annie Elizabeth Cooke, of Wake Forest, N. C., whose autobiography is herein printed. Rev. A. L. E. Weeks and wife, Mrs. Annie Elizabeth Cooke Weeks, have been working together in this institute since their marriage. Both the church and school, with which they are connected have made all the progress they could possibly make. To make the school a success Rev. Weeks has travelled through the surrounding community, and through the North, but there have been so many beggars for similar institutions that the substantial development of the school has been very slow. However, the ground purchased has been paid for, a part of which was sold to satisfy the claims against the other. The enterprise is very much in need of dormitories, for boys and girls. Rev. Weeks believes that

the work of spreading and deepening education in the South must be, continued through such institutions as Tuskegee, Hampton, the New Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute and many others. The reader asks how can I help? The most pressing needs of the school are as follows: Money for an administration building; and dormitories; 50.00 a year for annual scholarships for the training of one student a year; \$1,000 for permanent scholarships; money for current expenses in any amounts, however, small, and an endowment fund. Too much credit cannot be given to Hons. T. A. Green, J. B. Blades, W. B. Blades, J. A. Meadows and wife, C. W. Munger, I. H. Smith, Mayor James A. Bryan, and many others in New Bern, N. C., as well as The American Baptist Home Mission Society of New York, headed by Rev. H. L. Morehouse, D. D., and other friends through the North for the assistance they have rendered the Institute.

On February 28, 1906, the congregation of the First Baptist Church, of which Rev. Weeks is pastor, lost its house of worship, and in 16 months the friends of the church were called on to dedicate a new brick

structure 42x72 feet, having two stories. At this dedication, the main auditorium was finished, all but the painting. The Church on November 30, 1907, owed a debt of \$2,250, having raised from February 28, 1906 to that date the difference between \$8,000 and \$2,250 or \$4,750. This is very remarkable when it is known that this congregation is made up of common laborers, who receive an average of \$1.00 per day for their labor.

Rev. Weeks is still working at New Bern as head of the school and pastor of the Church spoken of above. He said to a friends a few days ago, "I shall seek to make life henceforth, a consecrated thing; that so, when the sunset is nearing, with its murky vapors and lowering skies, the very clouds of sorrow may be fringed with golden light. Thus will the song in the house of my pilgrimage be always the truest harmony. It will be composed of no jarring, discordant notes; but with all its varied tones, will form one substance, life-long melody; dropped for a moment in death, only to be resumed with the angels, and blended with the everlasting cadence of my Father's house. His motto is:

“Take me, O my Father, take me!
Take me, save me, through Thy Son;
That which Thou wouldst have me,
 make me,
Let Thy will in me be done.

“The highest glory is not where,
’Mid crimson clouds, the fight is won;
’Tis to reclaim the erring son,
Long used the sinful yoke to bear.”

The highest benedictions hide
Where sacrifice is pure and true;
And our poor self-denials, too,
If done for Christ, in Him abide.’

Life of Mrs. A. Elizabeth Cooke Weeks
wife of the President of New Bern
Collegiate Industrial Institute.

I was born, December 4, 1875, in a little log cabin on a plantation known as the Brooks' plantation in a little town seventeen miles north of Raleigh, known as Wake Forest, Wake County, N. C. My father, Rev. Henderson Cooke (who still lives,) is, and has always been since I have known him, an honest Christian farmer and shoemaker. Though not educated, yet ere the shackles of slavery were loosed from him he learned to read and write, and after freedom became a minister of the gospel. He has always been known for his honesty and pure Christian character. My mother, Mariah D. Cooke, a virtuous Christian woman, noted for her straightforward Christian disposition, has always put forth the most earnest efforts to rear her children to be honorable men and women.

We lived in the little log cabin of which I have spoken until I was four weeks, old, then we moved to another house, this also being a log cabin, but with a little more room. One large

room downstairs, a small one upstairs, and a kitchen. We remained here until I was more than two years old. During this time my father had bought 52-100 of an acre of land and put a three-room house on it, not of logs but of weather boarding. We then moved into this house, and my father would rent land on which to farm. At the age of five my mother allowed me to go to school with the teacher who boarded not very far from our house, as I was too small to go alone, and the children were working on the farm.

To my teacher, I feel a great deal is due, for I learned very fast, to the delight of both my teacher (Dr. N. F. Roberts, who is now Vice-President of Shaw University) and of my parents. Here I received encouragement therefore. When quite a little girl in the public school I had a great desire for an education that I might make a useful woman of myself. Being the fifth child of a family of thirteen children whose parents were very poor, there seemed to be no possible chance for me to accomplish my aim. The public schools would run from four to five months, but my father being a farmer could only spare us

from the farm about two or three months during the year. However anxious I might have been, I saw no way of succeeding without some special effort being put forth.

Just at this time I came across two stories headed thus: "Where there's a will there's a way," and "I'll find a way or make it." Then and there I decided that I had the "will," and if no one else should open the way for men, I'd find a way or make it. With this in mind, then came the thought. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." At the age of nine, I accepted Christ. It was then that I learned that with an earnest effort and faith in God much could be accomplished.

Many days from morn till night have I hoed the cotton and corn or followed the reaper to bind the sheaves, praying to God that some way might open that I might be able to accomplish my education.

At the age of sixteen I entered Shaw University. After remaining there nearly two months I succeeded in making a certificate and taught as an assistant in a public school for five months at a salary of \$15 a month.

This I gave to my father to help him, and he permitted me to return to Shaw that session and remain the balance of the term, which was about five weeks.

The next year, October, 1893, I entered Shaw and remained four weeks; then was called home on account of the sickness of my mother and had to remain home four months. During this time my mother kept very sick. My oldest sister was married, my next older sister was dead, the other two children who were my seniors were boys, so the household duties all fell on me. Then it was that I waited on my mother, cooked, washed, ironed, looked after the mending, and taught as an assistant in the public school there in our town. If one should ask me how I did it I could not tell, only I know I did it and the Lord was with me. I suppose it was one of the times when "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. 4: 13.

There was no hour in the night too cold or too late but that I was ready at any moment to administer to my mother's needs. At the end of the fourth month I returned to Shaw, giving papa what money I had made, to

help him and enable him to hire some one to wait on mamma while I stayed in school the remaining two months. My mother's sickness lasted four years, during which time my father was not able to do scarcely anything for me.

For six successive years I labored hard trying to accomplish that aim of my heart. During this time I had to undergo many hardships. Many times would I plod my way miles through the snow to and from my work, praying all the way that God would open the way for me. I need not mention the obstacles thrown in my way, for they were many, but the hand of Providence seemed to remove them just as I had done all that I could do.

At one time when it seemed that the door was almost closed to me, I secured a position as cook for the family of one of the professors of Shaw. By this means I got my board, and my father paid my tuition. But this work came so near taking all of my time that I had very little time for studying.

The class room work lasted from 8:30 to 1:15, during which time I would have from five to six studies

to recite. The remainder of the day was spent in work, and when could I get time to learn all of these lessons? Ah, then it was that every minute meant something to me. And after using every minute rather than go before my teachers with unlearned lessons I would get permission from the Matron to get up before day to study. And many times from two to five A. M., I would study with all earnestness and then retire at five to get one more hour's sleep.

For the six years that I have spoken of I had not been permitted to remain in school one entire session at a time. With a very earnest heart I had been praying to God to remain in school an entire session, and God, through His servant, had answered this prayer. For after every possible effort on my part had been put forth during the summer to secure means that I might return to school and had failed, then it was that I was told that friends in Boston had heard of my efforts through Dr. Meserve and had sent the money on to Shaw to pay my expense for my last two years in school.

Can any of you imagine how thankful I was when this news was told to me? My gratitude to them and God

I can never tell in words, but I mean to give my life for others to prove my gratefulness to those who so kindly helped me. Thus at the age of twenty-four, in the year 1900, I graduated from the Scientific Department at Shaw University.

The same year I was appointed teacher at the Howe University, Memphis, Tenn. Here I remained two years, and was asked to take a position as teacher in the New Bern Collegiate Industrial Institute. After I had taught here one year the president decided that he needed a helpmeet, and I thought it a wise decision, so in July, 1903, the president and I were united in the bonds of holy matrimony. Then our forces were more concentrated on the one thing, and that was to give our life to make this school a success. That the people in this section might have the privilege of a school where they could be taught how to become industrious Christian men and women.

Now I want to say that it is not an easy task to be in the founding of an institution, nor is it like going to heaven on flowery beds of ease. For, for the last four years I have carried forward a plan to raise money to help

defray the running expenses of the school. For about a month and a half, either in November or January, every day when the weather is fit, beside teaching, I canvass the entire city, taking in just so much each day. Oh, then it is that I walk until with tired and sore feet I feel almost disposed to give up, when this thought comes to me, "I'll bear the toil, endure the pain supported by thy word." ' And wit hall the strength that is left and a double determination I press forward until the task is complete.

And by these unyielding efforts we have succeeded in raising ordinary sums to help defray the expenses and also in securing pledges from some who promise to be annual donors to the work as long as it is wisely and executively run. These signs make us feel and know that we have God's benediction in the work. And though I have not the money to give to this work, if I will give my prayers, works, and myself, God will cause those who have the money to give to this work that it may go on blessing the people of this section and accomplishing its mission for which it was founded.

Now that my story is about to come to an end, I feel like saying, "All the

way my Saviour has led me" and the hardships which I have had to undergo have been a means of preparing me for this very work in which I am now engaged.

And like the river whose water is used for irrigating purposes distributes itself into hundreds of channels, pouring itself out upon the thirsty ground, causing it to blossom and rejoice. But where is the river now? It is lost, gone. Its self-life has been surrendered. Its channel is empty and dry. But it lives again in the fruitage of hundreds of fields. The harvest of many happy farmers are garnered because the river gave itself.

It is ever true that sacrifice is the price of service.

In saving others one cannot save himself.

Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN 21, 1908

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